



MS Distinction Standards

Committee chairs may use the space beneath each item for their statement.

Any adopted standards will be published in the department's graduate student handbook.

1. A dissertation, thesis, or project clearly and significantly exceeds expectations in terms of content, scope, and/or other characteristics, in comparison to prior works by graduate students in the department. Examples where this standard may be evident include: size, complexity, or other characteristics of dataset or data analysis; substantive length, depth, and/or breadth of work; and location, conditions, or other characteristics of field research efforts.
2. A dissertation, thesis, or project has clear impacts and/or applications beyond academia, whether this occurs before the author's degree completion or this is demonstrably foreseeable soon after degree completion. Examples where this standard may be evident include: the work has immediate or foreseeable applications in business, education, government, or other contexts; and the work has been published in whole or in part.
3. A dissertation, thesis, or project makes a clearly novel and significant academic contribution, whether in terms of theory, methodology, topical content, or some other characteristic. Examples where this standard may be evident include: the work expands or establishes new theories that have potentially wide relevance in appropriate fields; the work expands or establishes processes for analyzing or visualizing geospatial data; and the work presents data that significantly and robustly expands knowledge of specific topical areas.

Process: If a student committee agrees to award distinction to a dissertation, thesis, or project, the Committee Chair must provide to the Graduate Program Director and Department Chair a statement that identifies, explains, and justifies how the work in question meets at least two of the three criteria given above. This statement must be received and accepted by the Graduate Program Director (or Department Chair) before the Director (or Chair) approves distinction at the department level within the OGS approval chain.